

Decalogue for the Sharing Group

1. Meetings are led by the Holy Spirit through Mary.
2. Purpose of the meeting:
 - To become aware of my weaknesses and the truth of being loved by God
 - To respond to the desire to deepen my faith
 - To be open to my brothers and sisters in the group
 - To share different experiences of my faith and how God is present in my life
3. When I go to the meeting, I will pray to God for others and myself.
 - Prayer of empty hands or that of the tax collector is recommended.
4. I will remember that I am God's child who has the right to trust and await miracles.
5. As a participant in our meeting I will:
 - Serve others and not count my own merits
 - Create the atmosphere of calm, focus/concentration and openness
 - Not impose on others my ways of thinking, reacting and perceiving
 - Avoid giving advice or solving others' problems
 - Speak from my personal "I" rather than use such terms as "you, we, us, people, we should, others do this."
 - Avoid discussion and criticism
6. By keeping what is shared in the meeting confidential, I will preserve each participant's freedom to share openly and protect their dignity as a child of God.
7. I will not be afraid of moments of silence, since I or somebody else may need time to reflect. Moments of silence provide us with unique opportunities for prayer and entrustment to God.
8. I will remember to attentively listen to what my brother or sister is saying in order to help them in the process of sharing.
9. When I give a witness talk or share my faith, God's grace is not only given to me but it is being multiplied and given to others.
10. Above all, God expects from me humility and openness. Even one person who is humble and open to God can create an appropriate climate during a given meeting that will spread to all participants. The most important and desirable goal is not the format of the meeting, but it is to be open to God's grace and presence.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, No.2546, footnotes 338: Mt 5:3; 339: Cf. Lk 6:20; 340: St. Gregory of Nyssa, De beatitudinibus 1: PG 44, 1200D; cf. 2Cor 8:9; No. 2547, footnotes 341: Lk 6:24; 342: St. Augustine, De serm. Dom. in monte 1, 1, 3: PL.34, 1232; 343: Cf. Mt 6:25-34. <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism>
New American Bible © USCCB. All rights reserved. <https://bible.usccb.org/readings>
André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection: Holiness for the Poor* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2016). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org
Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us*

MARCH 24, 2024~ PALM SUNDAY ~ YEAR B
SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON SUNDAY'S READINGS

PREPARED BY:
FAMILIES OF NAZARETH MOVEMENT USA
COMMUNION OF LIFE WITH CHRIST THROUGH MARY

Opening Prayer
Read Decalogue
Read Scripture
Read Reflection

Reading I	Is 50:4-7
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24
Reading II	Phil 2:6-11
Gospel	Mk 14:1-15:47

Opening or Closing Prayer

Dearest Father, Your Son tells us, "Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." I long to be Your smallest child. Help me to rediscover You as the One Who delights in me, who calls me as His own.

My Jesus, You say to us, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." You are the way to heaven. Thank You for saving me and giving me Yourself in the Holy Eucharist. Reactivate the call of my Baptism to serve the Church in childlike humility, "boasting only in God."

Holy Spirit, reveal to me my weaknesses that I may seek Jesus' strength. Reveal to me my nothingness, that I may await all things from Him. Convince me of Jesus' words, "What is impossible for human beings is possible for God."

Blessed Mother, I entrust my prideful doubt, fear, discouragement and ingratitude to your intercession so that I will believe, as God's beloved child and yours, "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen

*Families of Nazareth USA
Summer retreat 2010*

Spiritual Reflection

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Phil 2:6-8

For natural man, this message is always difficult to hear. However, there is no other way than the path of humility and of sharing in the cross.

“Then human pride shall be abased, the arrogance of mortals brought low” (Is 2:17).

And how did God abase the pride of men? In terrifying them? In demonstrating to them his power? No. He abased it in lowering himself, in *descending*. In annihilating himself and allowing himself to be nailed to the cross, “taking the form of a slave” (Phil 2:7). He was found not only of low estate but he became the poorest of us all

Holiness is impossible without this *descent* into humility, without this annihilation. It is in the very depths of this descent that Jesus cried out: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mt 27:46).

How many poor, rejected, mocked, and poorly loved people utter this cry of distress in the depths of abandonment? Jesus suffers in them even though they are sometimes unaware. They are, as Paul VI magnificently said: “These poor blessed lambs that save the world without realizing it.” In fact, Christ *descended* and joined all the excluded, the rejected, the cursed ones. He became “a curse for us” (Gal 3:13).

Our wounds and poverty will be transformed one day into a glorious light if we offer them to Divine Mercy. Julian of Norwich, an English mystic expressed this in terms shocking at first glance, but deeply evangelical:

Any sinful soul must be healed... In front of God her wounds will remain glorious signs. Here below, sin is punished through suffering, but in heaven it will be rewarded through the merciful love of our Lord who desires that no mortal man loses the fruit of his works by any means. In this way, all shame will be transformed into joy and glory.

To descend with Christ into the depths of my wounds, to recognize my state of sinfulness, all this will change my distress into joy, and what was my shame

will become glory and light. We have never arrived at enough depth that the light cannot reach us in the night.

To join Christ so as to be transformed in him, we therefore need to pass through descent and suffering because Christ wants to relive in us the mystery of his *descent* into the abyss. And it is in the darkness of night that the light of the resurrection can radiate.

The true way of holiness is the narrow door that only the weak, the poor, and the children manage to enter by *descending* again and again into the depths of their woundedness and distress.

André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*, pp.36-38

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

2546 "Blessed are the poor in spirit." ³³⁸ The Beatitudes reveal an order of happiness and grace, of beauty and peace. Jesus celebrates the joy of the poor, to whom the Kingdom already belongs: ³³⁹

The Word speaks of voluntary humility as "poverty in spirit"; the Apostle gives an example of God's poverty when he says: "For your sakes he became poor." ³⁴⁰

2547 The Lord grieves over the rich, because they find their consolation in the abundance of goods. ³⁴¹ "Let the proud seek and love earthly kingdoms, but blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." ³⁴² Abandonment to the providence of the Father in heaven frees us from anxiety about tomorrow. ³⁴³ Trust in God is a preparation for the blessedness of the poor. They shall see God.

Questions for Reflection

1. In pursuing holiness, what is my perception of “descent” Do I find myself desiring spiritual accomplishments or am I ready to surrender my frailty, faults and weaknesses?
2. “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom” (Lk 23:42). How can this call for Mercy be actualized in my daily life?
3. The words of the Magnificat, “For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness” (Lk 1:48), reveal the mystery of Mary’s extraordinary relationship with God. How can she intercede for me, so that I may desire to become poor and await all things from Him?

Prayer after Sharing

Thank you, God, for allowing me to see the truth about my weaknesses and how it calls upon the abyss of your merciful Love.